

CITY OF EASTHAMPTON PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
50 Payson Avenue, Easthampton, MA 01027



Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

Planning Board Chair: Jesse Belcher - Timme

Planning Board Members:

X	Jesse Belcher-Timme (Chair)	X	Harry Schumann	X	James Zarvis
X	Daniel Hartman (attended remotely)	X	Kenneth Iavecchia	X	Christopher Cockshaw

Absent: None

Recording Clerk: Eli Bloch

City Planner: Jeff Bagg

Assistant Planner: Eli Bloch

Guests: Frank Demarinis, Don Abel, Keri Pyke (remote attendance), Rick Bryant, Eric Berzins, Herbert Singleton

MEETING AGENDA

Call to Order - 6:00 PM Chair Belcher-Timme

Public Speak: None

Planning Board Minutes: 02/07/2023, 03/07/2023

Member Cockshaw made a motion to approve the minutes from February 7th, Member Zarvis seconded the motion and all members of the Board voted in favor. Member Cockshaw made a motion to approve the minutes from March 7th, Member Zarvis seconded the motion and all members of the Board voted in favor.

ANR's: None

Public Hearings:

- 1. 6:00 PM Start - (Continued from 12/20/2022, 01/03/2023, 02/07/2023) Tasty Top Development, LLC-** seeking a Plan Approval under Section 7.4 (Smart Growth Overlay District) for two commercial pad sites, two mixed use buildings containing first floor commercial and 14 residential units each, a daycare & gymnastics facility, contractor storage buildings, one retail/commercial building, and one building with 18 residential units with at least 25% of units Affordable, and, a Plan Approval under Section 8.3 (Multifamily Housing) for 9 buildings each with 18 residential units with at least 15% Affordable, and, a Special Permit under Section 8.32 (b) for multiple buildings. Project will be phased and includes all necessary waivers, all associated site work, roadways, parking areas, lighting and other infrastructure. The properties are located at 93, 95, 97 Northampton Street (Map 128, Lots 113, 114 & 112) and consist of a total of 33.1 acres and are split zoned Highway Business (HB) and Residential Suburban A (R-15).

Rick Bryant the Traffic Engineer from Stantec gave an overview of the findings from traffic peer review:

- The traffic impact statement needs to go further in investigation.
- The study should identify what mitigation measures are needed, when they would be installed, and who would pay for them.
- At peak hours increased traffic levels would lead to level of service (LOS) "F" without a signal.
- A signal may not be sufficient to solve the problem as there would still be a long backup.
- A left turn lane is likely needed but may not be feasible since road widening would be needed.
- Traffic would cause long delays on West Street.
- Member Zarvis asked about alignment with Mountain View Street. Rick Bryant stated that it is preferable to have a four-way intersection as queues would block the driveways.

Frank Demarinis, Don Abel, and Keri Pyke spoke about the traffic peer review and possible alignment with Mountainview Street:

- Frank Demarinis stated that they had not had sufficient time to review and respond to the traffic peer review but would in due time.
- Don Abel explained that mountain view street is not a public right of way and is owned by all of the abutting properties. Chair Belcher-Timme rebutted that the legal status of the road was less important than how it is used and may be used in the future.
- Frank Demarinis explained that the driveway could not be moved as it was placed in such a way that they would be able to give land to Mass Highway for road widening if needed.
- Frank Demarinis stated that MassDOT would not entertain curb cut approval and mitigation measures until local land use permits were given.
- Keri Pyke said the traffic review provided reasonable suggestions and would work on a response.
- The board discussed possible conditions that could be put on the special permit in relation to driveway location and traffic mitigation and how to balance their role in relation to MassDOT.

Chair Belcher-Timme stated that the Board would be conducting site visits in groups of two to avoid a quorum of the Board, and the site visits would not be posted as public meetings and not open to the public. This was due to guidance on site visits from an Attorney General's memo.

Public Speak

Rick Cernak, 100 Northampton Street, Strathrile Properties - Stated that he was generally in favor of the project but wanted to see the driveway aligned with Mountainview street. He stated that the Stop & Shop application proposed dozens of different designs and that the current applicant has not worked with them or considered alternatives. He also stated that it is already very difficult to exit out of Mountainview street which itself could further be developed.

David Loring hired by 102 Northampton Street LLC- Expressed concern about traffic and the driveway non-alignment with Mountainview Street. He stated that queues could extended for 1,000 feet and

affect Florence Road intersection, and long wait times and more conflict points could lead to more unsafe driving.

Leslie Cernak, 100 Northampton Street, Strathrile Properties – Stated that she was concerned about safety at the intersection and that the driveway needed to be aligned with Mountainview Street. She stated that Mountainview street services about 80-100 cars per hour at it's peak.

Lucille Kostek, 12 Plymouth Avenue – Stated that she was against the project due to its size and environmental concerns and impact to the Manhan River. She also expressed concern about traffic and road safety.

Kot Kasom, 340 Pleasant Street – Stated they were generally in favor of the project but wanted the driveway to be aligned with Mountainview Street.

Rachel Keenan Roberts, 10 Chapman Avenue – Stated that the project did not meet the City's goals around smart growth and could be designed to be more ecologically sensitive. She stated that the back parcel was identified as both "critical natural landscape", "core habitat", and "prime farmland". She asked the developer to consider alternative designs with more density that preserved back land which she stated could also make the development more profitable. She asked the board to reject the project if changes are not made.

Therecia (last name unknown), 33 Echo Lane – Spoke against the project due to environmental impact.

The Board, Keri Pyke, and Rick Bryant discussed a timeline for changes to the traffic review. Chair Belcher-Timme encouraged the applicant to consider alternative designs. Member Zarvis made a motion to continue the meeting until May 2, Member Cockshaw seconded, all voted in favor.

The meeting was interrupted for several minutes due to technical difficulties.

Other Business:

1. 1776 Brewing – Per condition 2(b)(i) of the special permit dated June 7, 2021; the Board to review changes to the placement of a proposed band shed, and per condition 1. of the special permit; the Board to review proposed changes to the patio area and determine if the proposed changes are minor and thus do no warrant re-opening the public hearing or are major changes that do warrant re-opening of the public hearing.

Chair Belcher-Timme recused himself from the hearing and Vice-Chair Zarvis became the acting Chair.

Eric Berzins the applicant stated that the proposed design would be an improvement in sound mitigation from their previous proposal. He stated that one abutter would be getting less of a reduction than previously promised, but still a significant improvement.

Herbert Singleton a sound engineer presented an overview of the changes:

- Herbert Singleton stated that the band shed had been moved and was angled differently.
- Herbert Singleton stated most residences of Fort Hill road would see a slight improvement from the previous proposal.

- Herbert Singleton stated that the one property that would see a difference is 35 Fort Hill road which previously would have received a twenty decibel reduction and now would get a 10 decibel reduction.
- Herbert Singleton stated that absorption material would be added to Fort Hill Brewery, Eric Berzins added that the material had already been ordered.

Member Zarvis asked if abutters notices had been sent out or if the applicant had spoken to abutters. Planner Bagg and Eric Berzins replied no on both accounts. Member Zarvis asked if any abutters were present to speak about the proposal. Member Zarvis stated that ultimately since it was a request for modification it is ultimately up to the Board.

Laura Fisher, 61 Clapp Street – Expressed that she is encouraged that the applicant was taking steps to address this, but could not speak for her neighbors.

The Board discussed if a berm was being built to block sound. The applicant stated that they were not, and Herbert Singleton added that it would not be useful.

Jim O'Malley, 9 Fort Hill Road – Expressed that neighbors had very little trust in the applicant, and the applicant had been an inconsiderate neighbor. Member Zarvis informed Jim O'Malley that this was not in the purview of this particular meeting.

The Board discussed whether a final site plan was needed, especially one showing that a 20-foot drive aisle would be maintained behind the band shed. The applicant agreed that they would maintain a 20-foot drive aisle.

Member Cockshaw made a motion to consider the modifications to be minor and not warrant re-opening the public hearing, Member Schuman seconded, All voted in favor.

Member Schuman made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Member Cockshaw seconded, All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM

Next meeting: April 4, 2023 at 6pm